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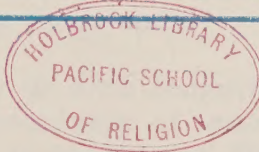
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the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.



No. 18

Fifteenth Year

May 7, 1948

The Presidents of the World Council Answer Appeal from the Patriarch of Jerusalem

In answer to an appeal sent to the World Council of Churches by His Beatitude Timotheos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, the five Presidents of the World Council have sent him the following letter:

"In reply to your letter of February 23rd, we the Presidents of the World Council of Churches, desire to express to Your Beatitude our Christian concern over the tragic happenings that daily disturb the peace of men in the Holy Land. The leaders of the Churches in many parts of the world have repeatedly called their people to prayer on behalf of men of all communities in Palestine. In particular, we have striven to remember the constant care and anxieties of the Christian minority and in such action as we have been to advance in favour of a just and peaceable settlement of the issues we have never let the existence and needs of our Christian brethren in Jerusalem and throughout the whole area, fade from our minds.

"But we have to confess with sorrow that all endeavours to find a solution to the problem which will command the support of all communities have so far failed.

"We are convinced that the enduring significance of the Holy Land for Christians, Jews and Moslem is a religious one and we should welcome any opportunity of collaborating with other religious leaders to secure a just and peaceful settlement.

"Your Beatitude may rest assured that we shall constantly bear in mind, and seek to forward the following aims:

"1) We desire that Christian people throughout the world should continue in prayer for the peace of the Holy Land, and especially for their fellow Christians.

"2) We desire that the land of our Lord's earthly ministry shall be a land where men can live in peace and quietness and where the status of the Holy Places shall be secured and access to them freely maintained.

"3) We desire to see the human rights and liberties of all men in Palestine guaranteed, and fully embodied in whatever settlement or provisions are eventually effective, and especially the right to worship God according to conscience, and to teach and preach the faith in which they believe.

"Your Beatitude is well aware that the political settlement of this matter rests with the United Nations. The attitude of Christian people to that organisation may be deeply affected by the action resolved upon. We shall take every step open to us to ensure that the decisions of the United Nations, or of other authorities concerned, may agree with these ends."

The letter is signed by Dr Marc Boegner, President of the French Protestant Federation, Dr Erling Eidem, Archbishop of Upsala, Dr Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr S. Germanos, Archbishop of Thyateira, and Dr John R. Mott, U.S.A.
E.P.S.Geneva

PALESTINE

Discovery of the Earliest Known Manuscript of Isaiah

The Director of the American School of Oriental Research at Jerusalem, Professor Millar Burrows of Yale University, has announced the discovery of the earliest known manuscript of the entire Biblical book of Isaiah. This discovery is of particular significance since its origin is dated about the first century B.C. Other complete texts of Isaiah are known to exist only as recently as the 9th century A.D.

The manuscript, a well-preserved scroll of parchment, is an almost perfect copy written in a hand similar to the script of the so-called Nash Papyrus and it confirms some writings of Septuaginta.

An other manuscript has been brought to light by scholars in the Holy Land. It is a commentary on the Book of Habakkuk. It seems to support the opinion held by many modern scholars that the book originally consisted only of the two first chapters.

A third scroll on leather appears to be the manual of discipline of a comparatively unknown little Jewish sect or monastic order, possibly the Essenes.

All these ancient scrolls have been preserved in the library of the Syrian Orthodox Monastery of St. Mark in Jerusalem and have been submitted to the American School of Oriental Research for identification.
E.P.S.Geneva

PALESTINE

Christian Work in Danger

According to the statement made by Dr Wynn C. Fairfield, secretary of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, and the Rev. Charles W. Ranson, general secretary of the International Missionary Council, the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine is causing great damage to the work missionary groups have performed in the past 100 years.

In support of their declaration, the two leaders made reference to a recent letter from the chairman of the United Missionary Council in Palestine and Syria, describing the destruction of Christian property by both Arabs and Jews, and the taking over of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem by Haganah, the Jewish defence force, after its evacuation by British troops.

The letter especially deplores the need for closing of schools, YMCAs and YWCAs, which formerly had been the meeting ground for people of different communities, and a place where Christians, Moslems and Jews learned to work and play together. Mission hospitals are being forced to close for lack of work. If a hospital is in a Jewish area, the letter says, Arabs cannot come to it. And the Jews are suspected by their own people if they come to Christian hospitals.

"Christians in Palestine feel", says the letter, "that in the tense and bitter conflict between Arab and Jew, their presence has been largely forgotten and their problems ignored. It is important that Christians in the U.S.A. should be reminded of the fact that the Churches in Palestine look to them for understanding and support."

E.P.S. Geneva

HUNGARY

Prayers for the Amsterdam Assembly

An example of the way in which the Churches are responding to the call to prayer for the Amsterdam Assembly comes from the Reformed Church in Hungary.

The four bishops of the Reformed Church in Hungary have issued a joint declaration asking the congregations to offer special intercessory prayers for the forthcoming Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam. Mention of the Amsterdam Assembly should be made in the prayers of intercession at morning services every Sunday until it convenes, the bishops urged. In this connection they called upon congregations to "pray that the Assembly reach its aim as ordered by God, so that blessings may come out of it to the whole human race."

The bishops also asked all assemblies of the Hungarian Reformed Church to discuss details of the programme to be taken up at Amsterdam. They suggested that the Amsterdam Assembly be the subject of at least three sermons during the next six months. Offerings of four designated Sunday morning services will be allotted to the expenses of the Hungarian delegation attending the Amsterdam meeting.

E.P.S. Geneva

HUNGARY

Reformed Church Behind the "Iron Curtain"

Professor Karl Barth has recently visited the Hungarian Reformed Church and his impressions are published in a long article in the "Kirchenblatt für die reformierte Schweiz" (April 29, 1948) with the above title. We quote some of the essential points.

"The main impression which I have brought back from Hungary is one of enlightenment and encouragement, but also a sense of shame. Of course, I am not referring to the political conditions which I saw there: there is hardly need to say that they were not nice, and no one expected me to call them nice. More important than that was the positive impression which I received, when I was in

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Hungary, of the spiritual and practical attitude and work of the Reformed Protestants in Hungary, who without having had any voice in the situation, have to put up with those conditions together with the whole country. (The Reformed Protestants are the 20% of the population).

"That does not mean that the Reformed Church of Hungary would acknowledge the state-system which is now in control there. If it did so, the Reformed Church would be in a more favourable position than the Roman Church. The Government has sent the Reformed Church several attractive invitations to do this, but it has not answered. The Reformed Church has expressed its sincere approval of certain measures passed by the new Government, especially of the new land-reform law, which affects the Church considerably. But it reserves the right to disapprove of certain other measures introduced by this State, if the case arises. I did not meet anyone in the Reformed Church who gave full allegiance and confidence to the new system. The childish enthusiasm of the fiery red Dean of Canterbury - who had visited Hungary shortly before I did - only aroused their amazement. The Reformed Church is in danger of not complying with the demands of the ruling to make a decision - which would mean a decision in favour of that party...

"The Reformed Church is also resisting the even closer and stronger temptation to join the Roman Catholics in forming a definite opposition. By doing so it could win many friends also. It cannot be easy for the Reformed Church to hear the reproaches of some of its members, that it is 'lukewarm' and that the only real Calvinist in Hungary today is the Roman Catholic Archbishop!... My impression of the Hungarian Reformed Protestants was that they would not remain silent when they ought to speak. But they see too clearly the mistakes made in the past, to rush to the opposite extreme now. And from the social side they are open to reject Communism altogether. They realise the weaknesses of the West only too well, and do not wish to be forced, by choosing this second possibility, into becoming partisans of western political ideas...

"What carried conviction for me was this: that the Hungarian Reformed Protestants were not preoccupied with all the undecided questions of East versus West, nor with the memory of the Russian horrors, nor with the question of the justice or injustice of their present Government; they are concentrating on their own positive task as a Church. They are trying to formulate the Word of God in fresh terms (which involves fundamental reconsideration on the theological side). And they are endeavouring to carry that message to the members of the Reformed Church themselves, first and foremost, as the first step towards all further work and towards determining their future attitude..."

E.P.S. Geneva

A Leading Catholic's View on Church Unity

In 1929 R.P. Max Pribilla, S.J., of Munich, stated his views concerning the Christian Churches' effort to achieve unity in a book entitled "Concerning Church Unity: Stockholm - Lausanne-- Rome". He has now made another similar statement in the Roman Catholic weekly "Die Furche" of May 1st, published in Vienna. Starting with the Catholic "Una Sancta Movement" which aims at a rapprochement between the divided confessions, Father Pribilla describes the international church conferences of the last thirty years, culminating in the approaching First Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

"The Roman Catholic Church holds aloof from these conferences", writes Father Pribilla, "not because it fails to recognise the positive Christian forces which are at work in them, but for reasons of dogma". The Catholic attitude to the question of church unity is then summarised in the following sentences, referring to the Encyclikon "Mortalium Animos" (1928):

"For the Roman Catholic there is only one Church founded by Christ, namely the Roman Catholic Church with its visible head, the Pope. For the Catholic, therefore, the question of church union can only be solved by re-uniting all Christians with the Catholic Church, while recognising its doctrine, its constitution and its form of worship". Hence "although the Catholic rejects the way of Luther and the other Reformers as erroneous, he may at the same time admit that the Reformation has great significance for the Church in the plan of providence." The direct opposite of this attitude is the conception of those Protestants who "regard the way of Luther as justified in essentials, although they may not admit every detail of his action".

Between these two conceptions, which are poles asunder, "there is no bridge visible to human eyes". So that a dogmatic or organisational unity of all the Christian Churches "here and now is impossible". "The attempt to bring about the unity of Christendom bears, in the deepest sense, the seal of all truly Christian actions: it is a hope against hope (Romans 4:18), something which cannot be achieved merely with human powers, but only through the grace of God." For "it is hidden from our eyes whether God wishes to bring about the unity of all Christians in this aeon."

Estrangement and antagonism, Father Pribilla continues, will give place, through the work of the ecumenical movement, to "a sense of reverence; we shall respect and love our brother in Christ, even if he holds a different faith... Christians must come to realise more and more that they have great spiritual riches in common, and that they must unite to defend them. This is particularly true in our own time, when all the laws of God and of man are disputed." That is why opportunities should be given "for the united voice of all the Christian Churches to be heard concerning the questions of international understanding and the new social order, so as to create a sort of world-conscience to which people will listen".

Father Pribilla mentions practical tasks "in the accomplishment of which Christians can cooperate without detriment to dogmatic differences", and gives the following example. "If a sister belonging to a Roman Catholic Order and a Protestant deaconess, on their way from Jerusalem to Jericho, find a man who has been attacked by thieves, they can help him together from motives of Christian love, without stopping first to reach an agreement together concerning the doctrine of justification". Humanity is like the man who had fallen among thieves "and because the need is too great to be met by the resources of any single Church, the Churches must join forces". Practical cooperation between Christians on these lines "will bring to the fore the things they hold in common". The impulse for these efforts is the recognition "that God is a God of truth, that there is only one Truth, and that all men who are solely concerned with the Truth are bound to come closer to one another... Then they may react upon one another, without detriment to their respect and love for one another". For "people may be united through struggling for high ideals."

Finally Father Pribilla looks back on the confessional disputes which were customary fifty or sixty years ago, but which are neither understood nor tolerated by church people today. "So we really have made progress. Every Christian feels uplifted when he realises that, in the midst of the torn and divided condition of men today, God has opened the slow eyes of Christians to perceive once more the high ideal of the One Church, and has thus given us proof that His providence is watching over Christendom even in this dark hour of history."

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

Ministers Draft Peace Programme

More than 200 clergymen from all parts of the United States met in Washington on April 8 for a conference inspired by denominational social action groups in Washington. Many Protestant denominations were represented. Dr O. Frederick Nolde, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, and Dr Ralph Sockman, leading Methodist preacher, were among the speakers.

The conference aimed at "averting war hysteria and redirecting the climate of public opinion in the direction of peace". The resolution called for a "national movement to undergird world peace efforts" and outlined a programme of action to enlist all Americans. The programme asked national leaders to cease efforts to put the United States on a war-time basis, and urged that the policy-making powers of government be restored immediately to civilian leadership. It demanded defeat of selective service and UMT, greater support of the United Nations, and "a policy of silence and patient negotiations without threat of military force". Local Churches were urged to "immediately express individual opinions through letters, a door-to-door peace information service and utilisation of all forms of communication to broadcast the message of realistic peace."

In addition, it was proposed that the movement be channeled through existing peace agencies of the various Protestant denominations, and coordinated into the peace programmes of groups like the Federal Council of Churches and the United Council of Church Women.

In his appeal Dr Nolde asked the Churches to seek positive approaches toward world peace. Such approaches should include church backing of an economic programme that will remove trade barriers, and church help in strengthening the American democratic processes.

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

Fellowship of Homecomers

Former prisoners of war who experienced a strengthening of their faith while in the camps, have decided to continue the unity attained there, in form of a Fellowship. This plans regular gatherings and awards inspiration for mutual intercession and missionary work.

War Blinded Students in Theology

One out of every twenty of the war-blinded students at various German highschools and active in the Church, has devoted his studies to theology. Two of them have already completed their studies and are serving the Church in Schleswig-Holstein and Westphalia; three pastors who lost their sight during the war, have now taken up their work in their old community.

E.P.S. Geneva

